

NATIONAL SIGNING DAY ISSUE

Aggieland

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ALSO INSIDE

MATT KENT
APRIL RYAN
COACH CHILDRESS
COACH EVANS
AND MORE...



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Kyler Murray Headlines
2015 Signing Class



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On the Cover: Kyler Murray headlines 2015 signing class. Photo by Sarah Pyatt '14.

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Howdy Ags!

The Signing Day Issue is always one of our most popular magazines we put out all year long. This one should be no exception. Inside we provide you with a breakdown of the top twelve national class Coach Sumlin and his staff have assembled this year. You'll also get a recap of the days leading up to NSD in the Quest for Kyler article. The 12th Man has a lot to be grateful for as, once again, Texas A&M has put together another stellar class that will provide talent and depth to our football team. The Ags finished up 2014 with an exciting come-from-behind victory against the West Virginia Mountaineers. Pictures of the game and a recap story are in this issue.

Also inside you'll find previews of baseball and softball provided by Coach Childress and Coach Evans. You'll also learn more about starting pitcher Matt Kent and veteran softball player April Ryan. Both Aggie basketball teams are wrapping up the regular season and preparing for post-season play. I'm excited to see if our men can return to the Big Dance once again.

The rest of our spring sports are in full swing and all are enjoying early success. Spring football begins in March and we will cover it, along with all of Coach Sumlin's new coaching hires, in our next issue.

Thanks & Gig'em!

Rob '88



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historic implosion...

The west side of Kyle Field came down on a Sunday morning in December as thousands of Aggies looked on. Phase II of the \$485 million renovation is underway, but the old side had to be cleared out first. It was quite an amazing site as the structure imploded in just a few seconds, leaving a cloud of dust that covered onlookers that were gathered to watch it fall.

Photo by Rob Havens '88.

finger roll and one...

6'7", 223-lb. forward Jalen Jones has been instrumental in the success of Aggie men's basketball this season. The Dallas native transferred from SMU and has found a home here in Aggieland. He has the ability to score inside and out and proves in this shot that he knows how to get to the rim. The men beat the Gators in a close 63-62 game at Reed.


Photo by Rob Havens '88.





snapshot





starting role...

Junior lefty Matt Kent closed out a series sweep versus Holy Cross with an impressive performance on a rainy Sunday of opening weekend. Moving into a starting role this season, Kent went a career-long seven innings. He allowed only five hits (two of which left the infield) in the victory. The Aggies won 6-1 with the lone opposing run being unearned.

Photo by Rob Havens '88.





international service...

Saskia Gavrilovska puts everything she has into this big serve against North Texas. The Ags defeated UNT 4-0 in the first home match of the spring. Saskia and her teammates look to make waves in the highly competitive SEC this season as they will once again face some of the best squads in the country.

Photo by Rob Havens '88.

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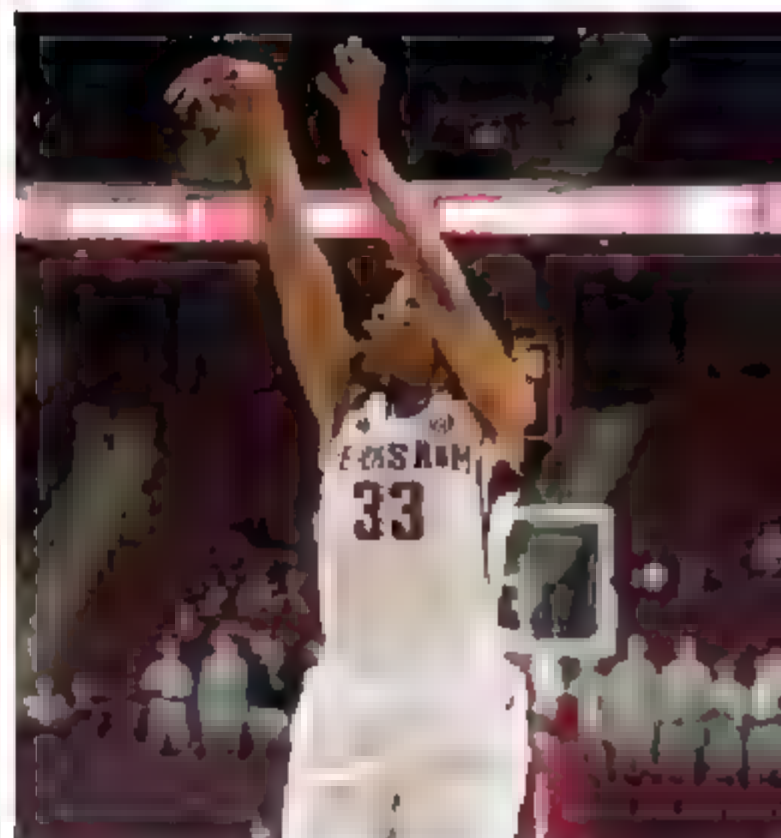
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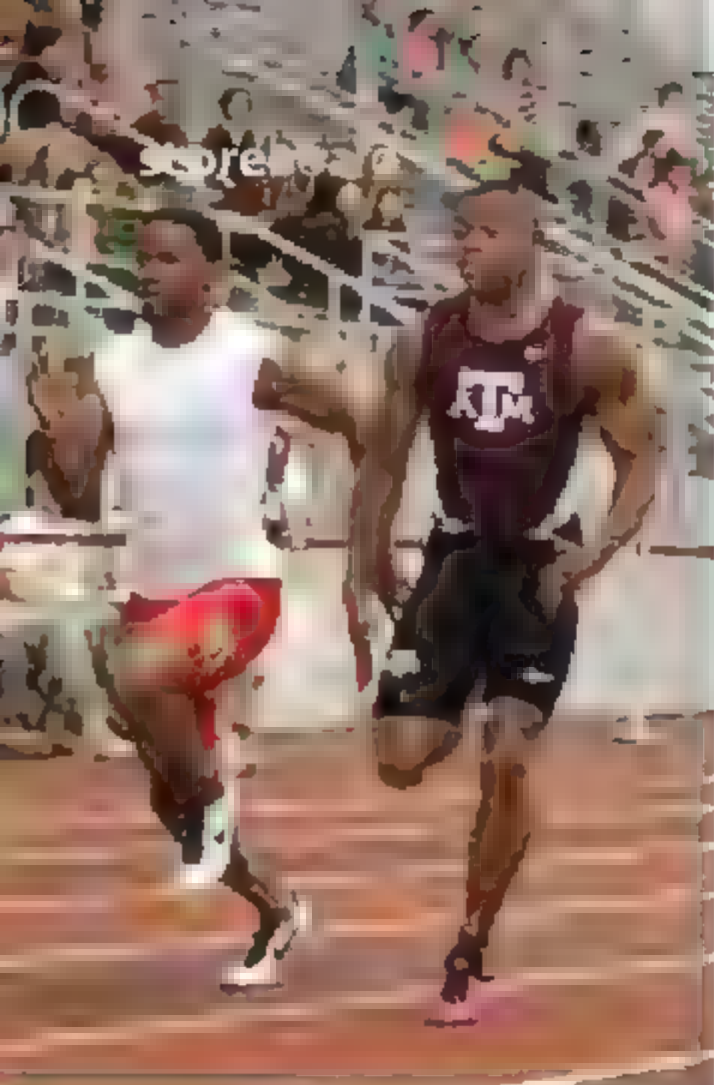


[men's basketball] Aggie Basketball is back! With their current 9-4 conference record and 18-7 overall, while sitting at third place in the SEC, this team has put it all together. With a strong finish, we could see this team dancing in March. Alex Caruso, Jalen Jones, Danuel House and Kourtney Roberson, along with a talented supporting cast, have shown they can compete with anyone in the country.



[women's basketball] Currently ranked number 15 in the country, our women's team is battling for the chance to host the first and second rounds of the NCAA tournament. The road has been tough, but our ladies have proven they are capable of making a run in the tournament. Courtney Walker and Courtney Williams continue to lead the team in scoring.





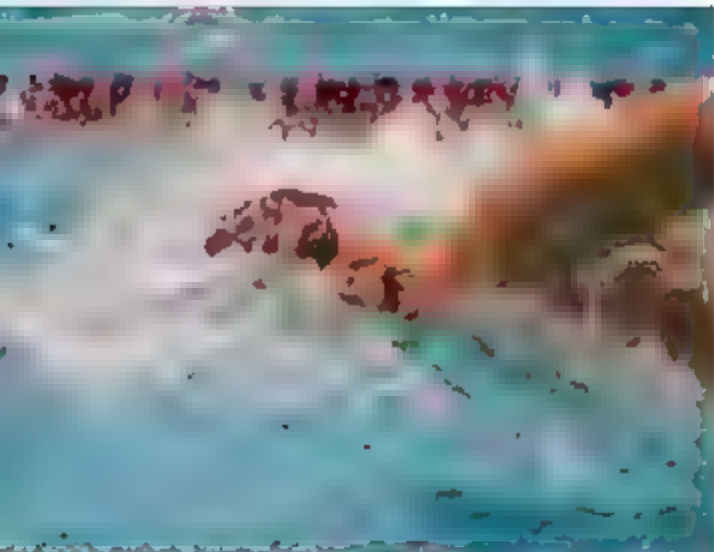
[men's & women's track] The men's and women's track teams continue to dominate this spring and both recently won first place in the Aggie Invitational. The SEC & National Indoor Championships await the most decorated athletic teams on campus. The NCAA Indoor Championships take place in Fayetteville, Arkansas March 13 & 14.



[women's tennis] The Aggies have won two and lost two matches so far this spring, but a close loss to #3 North Carolina on February 19 in a match that was decided on the final singles competition showed that these ladies can compete with the best. A tough conference slate is ahead for our ladies, but they are ready to battle for another SEC championship.



[men's tennis] The men are preparing for their conference matches to begin. So far, the highlight of the spring was a 4-3 victory over #5 Ohio State. Rain delays forced the competition to be played over two days, but the men showed mental toughness and were able to pull off the upset.



[men's swimming & diving] Texas A&M had two impressive victories over SMU and SEC rival LSU this spring. At press time, the men are competing in the SEC Championships and, after day one, are in sixth place.



[women's swimming & diving] The women continue to dominate in the pool and remain undefeated for the fall and spring. They have had wins against conference foes Tennessee, Alabama and LSU. They look to continue their winning ways in the SEC Championships.



[baseball] The Aggies return a veteran group with 70% of their offensive production coming back this season. In their first four games they have already put 47 runs on the board. With experienced returning pitching, this team looks to make a run at Omaha.

[softball] Coach Evans fields a very young team this spring with only two returning defensive starters. This year's club has already gotten on the winning track with an impressive 6-4 upset win over #6 UCLA while playing in California.



AGGIE SOCCER GREATS GET DRAFTED

BY ROB HAVENS '88

Three of Texas A&M's best players from last year's historic season of Aggie Soccer will be continuing their play as professionals in the National Women's Soccer League. Shea Groom, Meghan Streight and Bianca Brinson were all drafted on January 16th, just a little over a month after wrapping up their senior seasons.

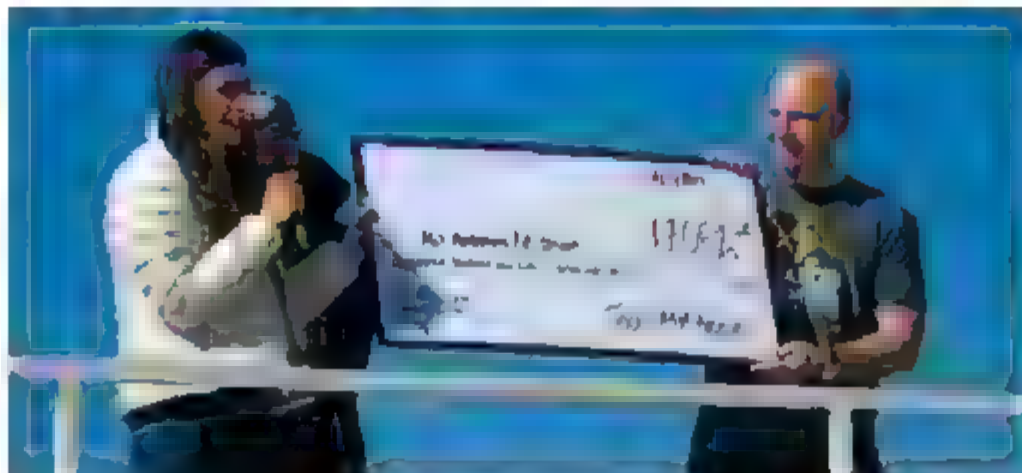
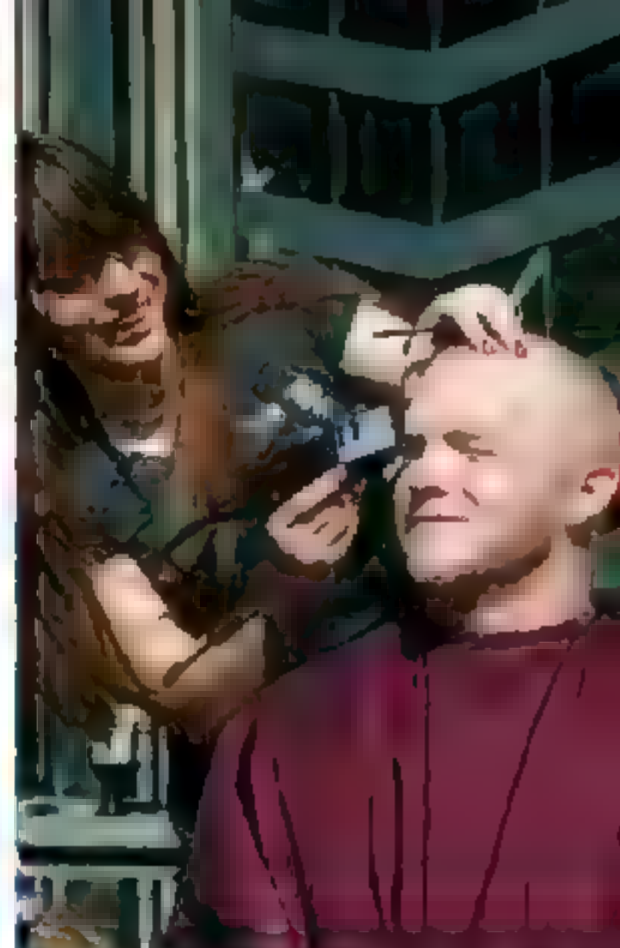
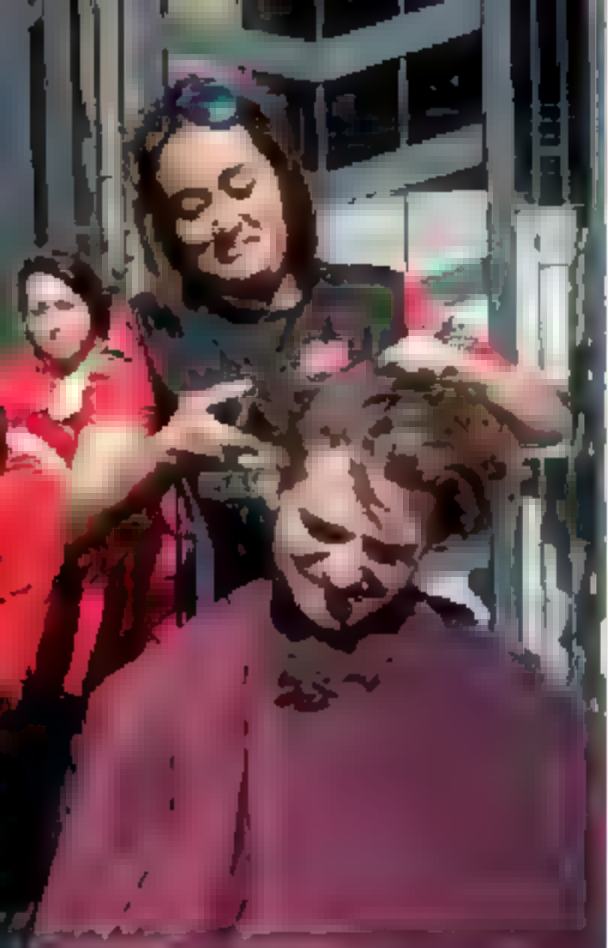
Groom was taken with the 12th overall pick by her hometown team, the FC Kansas City Blues, who are the reigning league champions. Shea leaves A&M as a two-time All American and three-time All SEC Performer, having played in 84 matches for the Aggies, scoring a total of 41 goals and 25 assists.

Only four picks later the Blues got even better when they chose Meghan Streight. Being selected the day before her wedding must have been the best gift she could ask for. Streight started in all 101 games of her Aggie career, a feat that will be hard to beat. The two-time All American was All Conference all four years at A&M. The defensive specialist tallied 34 points in her Aggie career, with 11 goals and 12 assists.

With the 6th pick of the third round, the Boston Breakers chose the '14 SEC Tournament MVP, Bianca Brinson. She appeared in 97 matches, including 52 starts for A&M. Brinson scored 16 goals for the maroon and white, along with 21 assists. Bianca was named All SEC-First Team as a senior.

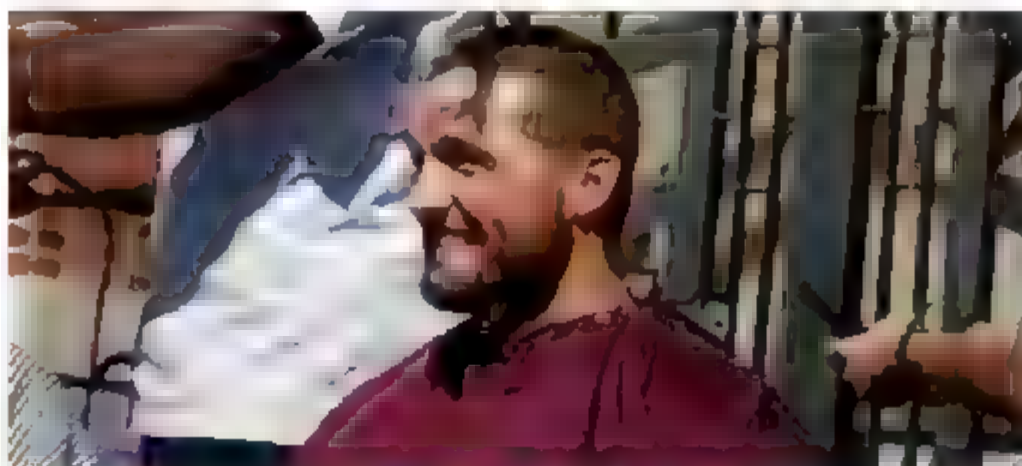
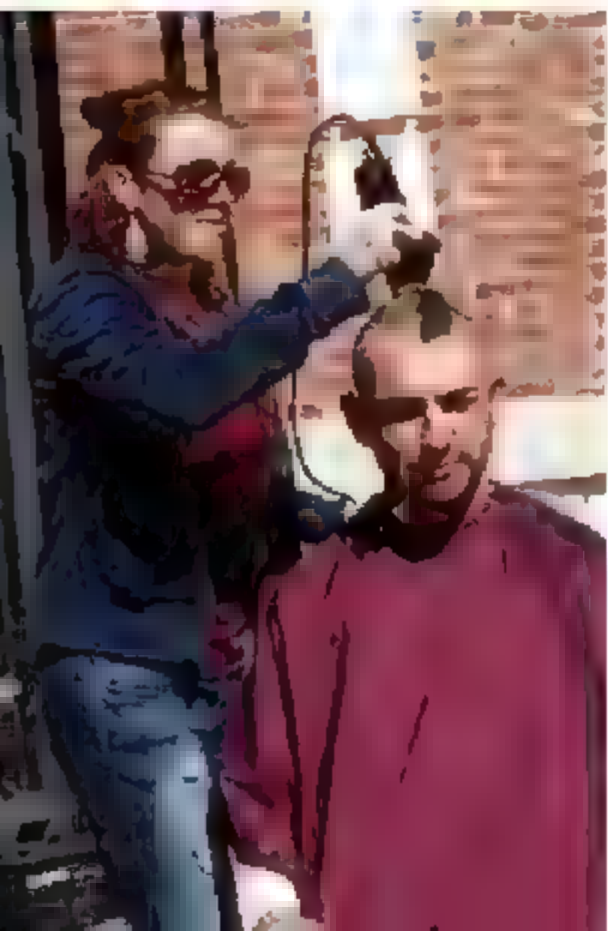
We are so proud of all three of these ladies who have blessed our program with their amazing play and, more importantly, their incredible character. They will be great ambassadors for our school as they move into the professional ranks. Gig'em and congratulations, ladies!





THERE'S A BUZZ AT BLUE BELL

The Texas A&M Baseball Team shaved their heads and raised money to show their support for the V's Cancer Foundation. Before the season the team had a goal of raising \$6,000 for the cause, but in just about a month's time the team was able to raise over \$17,000, making the Ags the top fundraiser out of the fifty-six teams that participated in the event. In addition to raising money, the Aggies went a step further by shaving their heads to show their support. Coaches and players lined up in front of Blue Bell Park and got their heads shaved in front of their families and fans. Some of them were not too keen on the idea of losing their locks, but they were all great sports and sacrificed for the fight against childhood cancers.



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PHOTO COURTESY OF ENNIS FOOTBALL TEAM

TOP 12 CLASS

Breaking Down the 2015 Recruiting Class

Jay Bradford

POSITION RB **HEIGHT** 5'11" **WEIGHT** 192
HIGH SCHOOL Splendora **HOMETOWN** Splendora, TX

SUPERLATIVES U.S. Army All-American, first-team all-district at RB **CHOSE A&M OVER** Baylor, LSU, Texas

Bradford possesses an impressive burst of speed with a top-notch jump cut. Runs with power and decisiveness

Kendall Bussey

POSITION RB **HEIGHT** 5'9" **WEIGHT** 200
HIGH SCHOOL Isdore Newman **HOMETOWN** New Orleans, LA

SUPERLATIVES Gained over 2000 all-purpose yards and scored a school record 35 touchdowns **CHOSE A&M OVER** Nebraska, Tennessee

Bussey is a dangerous runner with take-it-to-the-house speed. Rarely takes a clean shot from a defender. Runs with power and is extremely hard to knock off his feet

DeShawn Capers-Smith

POSITION DB **HEIGHT** 6'0" **WEIGHT** 180
HIGH SCHOOL Warren Easton **HOMETOWN** New Orleans, LA

SUPERLATIVES Louisiana Gatorade Player of the Year, Louisiana's Mr. Football, 4A Offensive Player of the Year **CHOSE A&M OVER** Missouri, Ole Miss, Tennessee, UCLA

Capers-Smith is a play-maker who excelled on both sides of the football in high school. Tremendous athlete with great field vision

Jordan Davis

POSITION TE **HEIGHT** 6'4" **WEIGHT** 255
HIGH SCHOOL Clear Lake **HOMETOWN** Texas City, TX

SUPERLATIVES Semper Par All American, PrepStar All-American **CHOSE A&M OVER** Florida State, Miami, Texas

Davis is adept at getting open and has tremendous hands. Finished his prep career with more than 100 catches.



Jay Bradford (RB)
Splendora HS

Evans (DB)
Mississippi Gulf Coast CC



Justin Dunning

POSITION DB **HEIGHT** 6'4" **WEIGHT** 206
HIGH SCHOOL Whitehouse **HOMETOWN**
Whitehouse, TX

SUPERLATIVES Nike's The Opening Defensive MVP, PrepStar Top 150 Dream Teamer
CHOSE A&M OVER Baylor, Florida State, LSU, Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Texas

Dunning is a hard-hitting, physical presence from the safety position. Long player that can make plays all over the field. Punishes receivers that come across the middle

Landis Durham

POSITION LB **HEIGHT** 6'3" **WEIGHT** 232
HIGH SCHOOL Plano East **HOMETOWN**
Plano, TX

SUPERLATIVES All-Collin County Utility Player of the Year, 6-6A Second Team All-District, PrepStar All-American **CHOSE A&M OVER** Baylor, Mississippi State, Nebraska, TCU, Washington

Durham has a very quick first step. HS coach praises his motor and his ability to get to the football. Extremely physical defender that doesn't shy away from contact. Versatile athlete; was the starting punter and saw some action as a goal-line running back.

Roney Elam

POSITION DB **HEIGHT** 6'2" **WEIGHT** 173
HIGH SCHOOL Newton **HOMETOWN**
Newton, TX

SUPERLATIVES 3A First Team All-State, 11-3A District MVP, First Team Super Gold Team, PrepStar All-American, First Team All-District at QB and DB **CHOSE A&M OVER** Alabama, Arkansas, LSU, Oklahoma, Texas

Elam is a rangy, two-way player and was a dominant force in HS. Earned first-team all-state honors at defensive back. Has tremendous length and leaping ability.

Trevor Elbert

POSITION OL **HEIGHT** 6'6" **WEIGHT** 310
HIGH SCHOOL Heath **HOMETOWN**
Rockwall, TX

SUPERLATIVES 12-5A First Team All-District, U.S. Army All-American, PrepStar All-American **CHOSE A&M OVER** Alabama, Auburn, Ohio State, Oklahoma, Texas

Elbert is a dominant force at tackle and a mauler in the run game with the athletic ability to get to blocks down the field. Possesses excellent footwork and technique. Very hard to separate from when he gets his hands on the defender.

Justin Evans

POSITION DB **HEIGHT** 6'0" **WEIGHT** 193
HIGH SCHOOL Stone HS / Mississippi Gulf Coast CC **HOMETOWN** Wiggins, MS

SUPERLATIVES First Team MACJC All-Conference **CHOSE A&M OVER** Auburn, Georgia, Ole Miss, Texas

Evans is a play-making safety with great speed and instincts. Very good run-stopper. Standout baseball player in HS with a .495 batting average.

Riley Garner

POSITION LB **HEIGHT** 6'3" **WEIGHT** 225
HIGH SCHOOL A&M Consolidated
HOMETOWN College Station, TX

SUPERLATIVES 14-5A First Team All-District, PrepStar All-Midlands Region **CHOSE A&M OVER** Arkansas, Colorado, Fresno State, Utah

Garner is a local product with excellent speed and strength. Controlled the edge for A&M Consolidated. Excellent all-around athlete. Had enough speed to play safety as a sophomore before moving to linebacker as a junior.

Claude George

POSITION LB **HEIGHT** 6'2" **WEIGHT** 235
HIGH SCHOOL Acadiana HS / Hutchinson
(Kan.) CC **HOMETOWN** Lafayette, LA

SUPERLATIVES Second-team NJCAA All-American selection, First-team All-Jayhawk Conference pick **CHOSE A&M OVER** Arizona State, Memphis, Miami, Washington

George is a versatile linebacker capable of controlling the middle of the defense or out on the perimeter. Rangy linebacker with very good length. Possesses excellent pass-rushing skills. Hard worker and quick learner.

Kingsley Keke

POSITION DL **HEIGHT** 6'3" **WEIGHT** 308
HIGH SCHOOL George Ranch
HOMETOWN Richmond, TX

SUPERLATIVES 5A All-State Honorable Mention, Lone Star Elite Third Team, PrepStar All-Midlands Region **CHOSE A&M OVER** Florida, Oklahoma, Texas

Keke is a big and athletic defensive lineman. Physical force and possesses a very quick first step, which allows him to spend a lot of time in opponents' backfields.

Christian Kirk

POSITION WR **HEIGHT** 5'11" **WEIGHT** 191
HIGH SCHOOL Saguaro **HOMETOWN**
Scottsdale, AZ

SUPERLATIVES First Team MaxPreps All-American, Division III Player of the Year, Arizona Gatorade Player of the Year, Division I First Team All-State **CHOSE A&M OVER** Arizona State, Auburn, USC, UCLA

Kirk is an elite wide receiver prospect who excelled as a receiver, running back, kick returner, and defensive back. Extremely quick and powerful and possesses tremendous football skills and savvy.

Daniel LaCamera

POSITION PK/P **HEIGHT** 6'4" **WEIGHT** 215
HIGH SCHOOL East Lake **HOMETOWN**
Tarpon Springs, FL

SUPERLATIVES Semper Fi All-American, PrepStar All-Southeast Region **CHOSE A&M OVER** Colorado, Florida

LaCamera possesses a very strong leg and rarely allows a kickoff return chance. Polished placekicker with excellent technique. Solid all-around athlete.

Connor Lanfear

POSITION OL **HEIGHT** 6'6" **WEIGHT** 289
HIGH SCHOOL Hays **HOMETOWN**
Buda, TX

SUPERLATIVES 6A Second Team All-State, 27-4A Lineman MVP, Semper Fi All-American, First Team All-County, PrepStar Top 150 Dream Teamer **CHOSE A&M OVER** Florida State, LSU, Oklahoma, Texas, UCLA

Lanfear is a punishing run blocker who overwhelmed defenders at Buda Hays HS. Excellent strength and technique. Has very good athletic ability and quick feet for his size.

James Lockhart

POSITION DL **HEIGHT** 6'3" **WEIGHT** 255
HIGH SCHOOL Ennis **HOMETOWN**
Ennis, TX

SUPERLATIVES 5A Second Team All-State, 16-5A Defensive MVP, Army All-American, First Team All-USA Texas **CHOSE A&M OVER** Alabama, Baylor, Notre Dame, Ohio State, Oklahoma, Stanford, Texas

Lockhart is an elite pass-rusher from his defensive end position in HS. Extremely quick first step. Very strong at the point of attack.

Daylon Mack

POSITION DL **HEIGHT** 6'1" **WEIGHT** 320
HIGH SCHOOL Gladewater **HOMETOWN**
Gladewater, TX

SUPERLATIVES 4A Second Team All-State, Under Armour All-American, First Team All-USA Texas, 6-4A Division II All-District MVP, Lone Star Elite First Team **CHOSE A&M OVER** LSU, TCU, Texas

Mack was one of the most dominant defensive linemen in the state of Texas the past three seasons. Extremely quick and powerful. Always in opponents' backfield, despite facing constant double teams. Excellent athlete.

Erik McCoy

POSITION OL **HEIGHT** 6'4" **WEIGHT** 304
HIGH SCHOOL Lufkin **HOMETOWN**
Lufkin, TX

SUPERLATIVES 5A Second Team All-State, 16-5A First Team All-District, PrepStar All-Midlands Region **CHOSE A&M OVER** Houston, Kansas, Oklahoma State

McCoy is a versatile offensive lineman. Saw action at guard and tackle at Lufkin HS. Savvy player who made all the offensive calls for the Panthers. Quick feet allow him to make blocks in space.



Richard Moore

POSITION LB **HEIGHT** 6'1" **WEIGHT** 210
HIGH SCHOOL Cedar Hill **HOMETOWN**
Cedar Hill, TX

SUPERLATIVES 6A First Team All-State, Semper Fi All-American, 8-6A Co-Defensive MVP, Dallas All-Area First Team, Lone Star Elite First Team **CHOSE A&M OVER** Baylor, Kansas State, Oklahoma State, TCU

Moore is an incredibly instinctive linebacker who makes plays all over the field. Made over 350 tackles, including 60-plus in opponents' backfield. HS coach compares him to former Texas A&M All-America linebacker Dat Nguyen.

Kyler Murray

POSITION QB **HEIGHT** 5'11" **WEIGHT** 185
HIGH SCHOOL Allen **HOMETOWN**
Allen, TX

SUPERLATIVES National Gatorade Player of the Year, Texas Gatorade Player of the Year, MaxPreps National Player of the Year, 6A Offensive Player of the Year, Tom Landry North Texas Player of the Year, Under Armour All-American, First Team All-USA Offensive Player of the Year, First Team All-USA Texas Offensive Player of the Year **CHOSE A&M OVER** Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas

Murray ranks as one of the most accomplished Texas high school players ever after leading Allen HS to three straight state titles and never losing a game as a starting QB (42-0). Rolled up 14,500 total yards as a rusher and a passer and scored 186 combined touchdowns in his three seasons.

Larry Pryor

POSITION DB **HEIGHT** 6'0" **WEIGHT** 195
HIGH SCHOOL Sulphur Springs
HOMETOWN Sulphur Springs, TX

SUPERLATIVES 15-5A District MVP, East Texas Third Team Super Team **CHOSE A&M OVER** Arkansas, Baylor, LSU, Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Texas

Pryor was the district MVP at QB as a junior and senior at Sulphur Springs HS but will line up at safety for the Aggies. Excelled on defense as a freshman and sophomore. Tremendous open-field tackler and physical hitter on defense. Fluid athlete with very good football skills.

Damion Ratley

POSITION WR **HEIGHT** 6'2" **WEIGHT** 188
HIGH SCHOOL Yoakum HS / Blinn JC
HOMETOWN Yoakum, TX

SUPERLATIVES NJCAA Honorable Mention All-American **CHOSE A&M OVER** Kentucky, Texas Tech, West Virginia

Ratley is a fleet wide receiver with excellent hands. Does a good job of using his body to create space and catching the ball in traffic. Fights for the football when it's in the air. Twenty of his forty-five catches as a freshman at Blinn JC resulted in a touchdown. Averaged an amazing 26.6 yards per catch.

Kemah Siverand

POSITION WR **HEIGHT** 6'1" **WEIGHT** 190
HIGH SCHOOL Cypress Ridge
HOMETOWN Cypress, TX

SUPERLATIVES 17-6A First Team All-District, Semper Fi All-American **CHOSE A&M OVER** Arkansas, LSU, Ohio State, Texas

Siverand is a play-making wide receiver with tremendous speed. Very quick off the line of scrimmage and runs crisp routes. Catches the ball in traffic and is a dangerous runner after the catch. Also excels as a sprinter in track and field.

Keaton Sutherland

POSITION OL **HEIGHT** 6'7" **WEIGHT** 294
HIGH SCHOOL Marcus
HOMETOWN Flower Mound, TX

SUPERLATIVES District 5-5A Defensive Newcomer of the Year, First Team All-District, Army All-American, Dallas All-Area First Team **CHOSE A&M OVER** Arkansas, Miami, Oklahoma, Texas

Sutherland is a physical left tackle with polished technique as a pass protector. Finishes his blocks extremely well. Dominant force at the highest level of Texas HS football.

Dwaine Thomas

POSITION LB **HEIGHT** 6'2" **WEIGHT** 218
HIGH SCHOOL Hahnville **HOMETOWN**
Boutte, LA

SUPERLATIVES 5A First Team All-State, First Team All-USA Louisiana, 7-5A First Team All-District, Rated No. 39 on the New Orleans Times-Picayune Nifty 50 **CHOSE A&M OVER** Houston, Kansas, Louisiana-Lafayette, Oklahoma

Thomas is a first-team All-Louisiana linebacker. Very strong tackler with sideline-to-sideline speed. Versatile defender that excels against the run and in space on the perimeter.

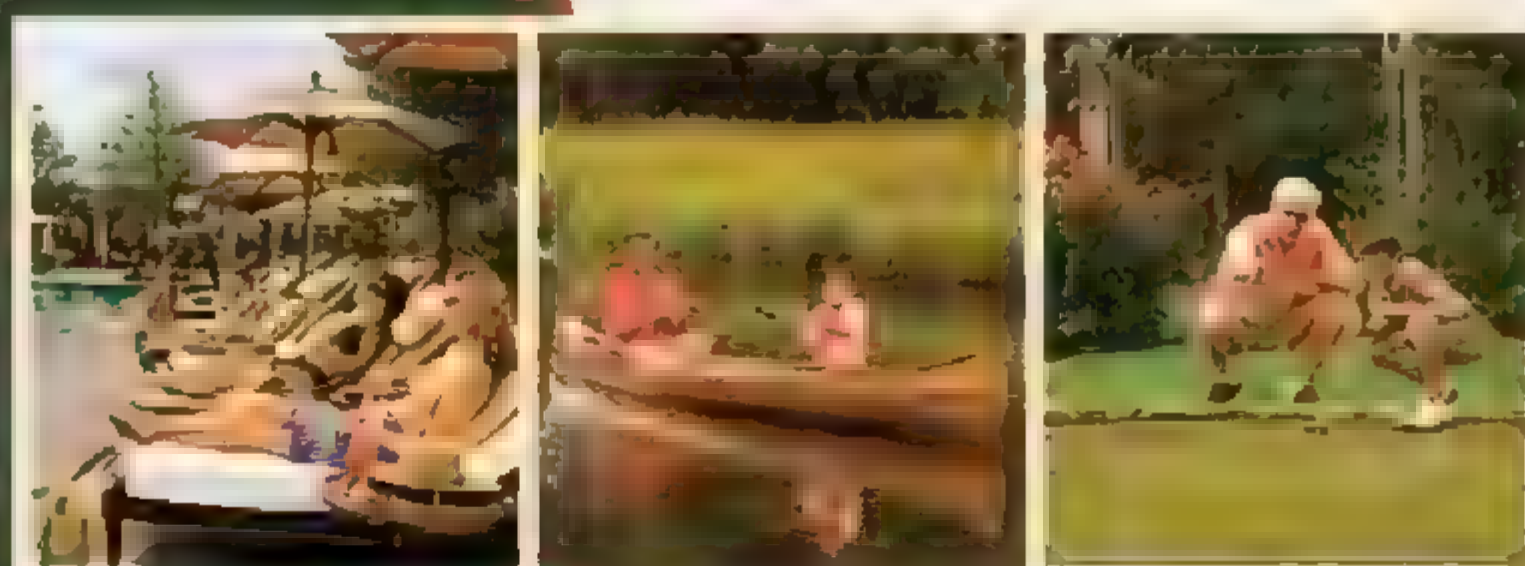




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THE QUEST FOR KYLER

BY ROB HAVENS '88

"Following my heart... #GigEm" was the tweet that set every Aggie's mind at ease and rocked the Twitter world. Ags around the world whooped and Horns cried as the seventeen-year-old phenom from Allen reconfirmed his commitment via social media.

For our readers that aren't familiar with Twitter, don't feel bad. I got my own personal account just so I could keep tabs on my 18-year-old son so he doesn't tweet anything he might regret later. The younger generation doesn't always realize that the internet hasn't always existed and that, in the old days, you would actually talk to people on a device that was connected to the wall with a cord called a telephone. The idea of not being able to express your feelings and let everyone know what you're doing with just a few swipes of your thumbs is preposterous to them.

Twitter allows users to instantly send pictures, videos and messages for all the world to see. It has added a whole new dimension to the world of recruiting. It has also created a slew of "experts" who dissect and report what those tweets mean. Coaches use it, recruits use it, and fans can't get enough of it. And just like times have changed from rotary phones to the smart phone age, it has changed the way recruiting is done. More importantly, it has affected the recruits themselves, as well as their families.

Kyler's road to A&M can be traced back to the 80's. His dad, Kevin Murray, is a legend in Aggie football. I was a student at A&M when he played, and some of my fondest memories of Aggie football are when he was under center. This includes the best game I've ever seen at Kyle Field when he led the Aggies from behind to beat Baylor 31-30 in '86. It's one of the top ten games to ever be played in Aggieland.

Seventeen-year-old Kyler had the benefit of having a quarterback coach living in his house as he grew up. He was learning to read coverages and proper footwork while other kids were learning their ABC's. Experts have said he is the most polished quarterback they have ever seen coming out of high school. Kyler won a historic forty-three straight games, including three state championships, in the toughest division in Texas high school football. He threw 117 touchdown passes and added another 69 rushing scores in his career. He put up Play-Station-type numbers showcasing

his unbelievable talents and finished high school as the top dual threat quarterback prospect in the country. Simply put, the kid is a winner!

So, on May 28, 2014 when Kyler announced he would be bringing his talents to Texas A&M, the Aggies must have felt like they won the lottery. Murray had offers from several big name schools including Alabama, Ohio State and Oregon. His early commitment before his senior season allowed the Ags to shut down the search for other quarterback prospects. With Kenny Hill and Kyle Allen already at A&M, the stable of NFL caliber quarterbacks was pretty incredible.

Kyler's commitment not only filled a need and added an unbelievable talent, but it also gave the Aggies a huge recruiting advantage. Great players want to play with great players. Murray's commitment generated interest from the country's best players. Coach Sumlin and his staff put together one of the nation's best classes. It looked like smooth sailing to another top ten class until a three game losing streak and the ensuing firebomb caused by the Twittersphere made the road to National Signing Day a little bumpier.

The problem with Twitter is that anyone can post or tweet anything, true or untrue, and it can take on a life of its own. Recruits that are committed can

be swayed one way or another and a fan base can be incited by a tweet or a picture, whether it's the truth or a made-up fabrication.

There were tweets in December that Kyler was considering switching to Oklahoma. There were tweets that Oregon would make a late run and bring the talented recruit to Eugene. But the Twitter world went nuts when word came out that Kyler was taking an unofficial mid-week visit to Austin, just two weeks before Signing Day. When the Aggie commit tweeted out a picture of a Texas jersey with his number on it, both fan bases went nuts.

The fire was ignited further when a photo of Kyler wearing an orange tie to an awards banquet went viral. For the next ten days, Aggies and Longhorns battled each other in Twitter wars. The 12th Man was on edge as word came out that Kyler would have one last home visit with Coach Sumlin on Thursday night, followed by an in-home visit with Texas' Coach Strong the following night. Longhorns everywhere were claiming he was gone. Even long-time UT commit Zach Gentry bolted after hearing the news. He de-committed from Texas and went to Michigan, leaving the Horns with all their eggs in the Kyler Murray basket.

Murray was trending on Twitter as Ags and Horns tried to decipher what

tweets meant and who would win the biggest recruiting battle in the state. On Thursday night following Coach Sumlin's visit, the tweet the 12th Man was hoping for came. Kyler reaffirmed his commitment in the classiest of ways, stating that he was going to follow his heart, #GigEm. With the swipe of his thumb, he reassured a fan base that loved him and broke the hearts of a fan base that had hoped to steal him away.

Just six days later, Kyler signed his Letter of Intent in front of a packed house in Allen. The Aggie legacy and greatest player to ever play quarterback in the state of Texas is coming home to Aggieland.

Recruiting has definitely changed over the years, and coaches have had to adapt to modern-day technology and the nuances of today's players. But the one thing that hasn't changed is that the recruits are still seventeen- and eighteen-year-old kids with families that love them. Texas A&M is so blessed to bring in the son of an Aggie great that loves A&M and who grew up cheering for the Aggies. In addition to his phenomenal athletic ability, Kyler is bringing a classy attitude that he maintained throughout the entire process. He has helped build the new class and is ready to compete for the starting job. But the best thing is that he is following his heart. #GigEm.





LIBERTY BOWL R

BY ROB HAVENS '88

Going into the Liberty Bowl, the Aggies were trying to rebound after two tough losses at Kyle Field and the dismissal of defensive coordinator Mark Snyder. The team finished the regular season with a 7-5 record after a 5-0 start. The good news for the team was that young players like freshman quarterback Kyle Allen and several talented freshmen on the defensive side of the ball had shown signs of maturation over the final four games. The Aggies were going to use the month-long break and the Liberty Bowl as a springboard for the 2015 season, and that's exactly what they did.

Showing the confidence of a four-year starter, Kyle Allen threw four touchdowns and ran for a fifth as the

true freshman led the Aggies to a 45-37 win over the Mountaineers. Allen was 22 of 35 passing for an impressive 294 yards. After the Aggies fell behind 17-7, Kyle took charge, refusing to let the team lose their final game of the season. Spreading the ball all over the field, he completed passes to nine different receivers. The Aggie offense finished the game with 529 total yards.

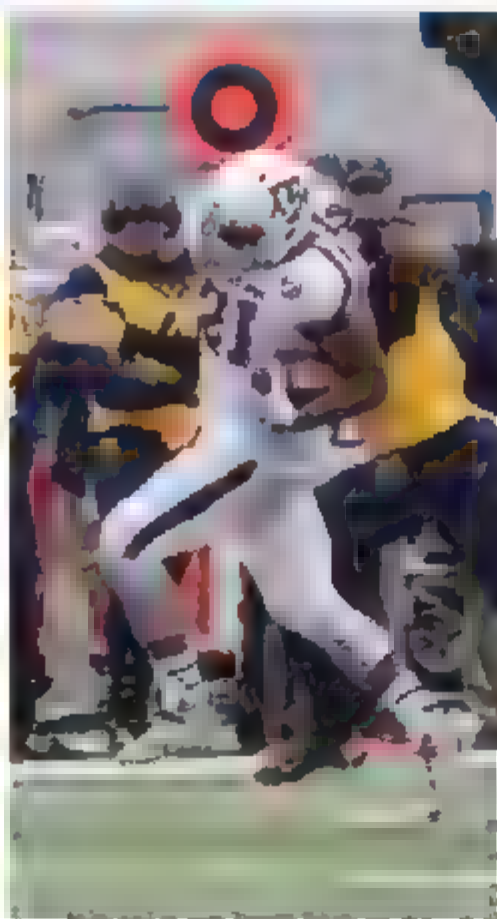
Tra Carson rushed for a career-high 133 yards on 25 carries behind a motivated offensive line eager to prove that they were the talented group Aggie fans had expected this year. Carson's breakout performance was exactly what the team needed in this shoot-out contest between two teams that typically win through the air.

The defense, under the direction of first-time signal caller and interim DC Mark Hagan, made plays when they needed to and held West Virginia to field goals instead of touchdowns on three drives. They forced WVU to punt five times and caused one fumble, giving the Aggies the necessary margin to win the game.

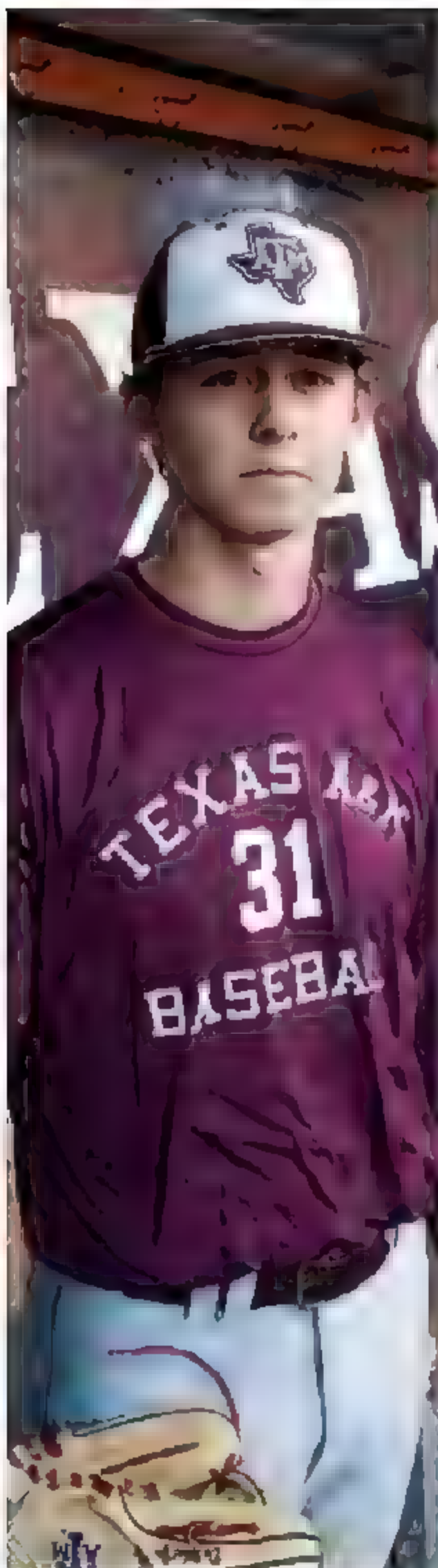
It was another exciting game for the Aggies, who won their fourth bowl game in a row. The victory made this senior class the first one in school history to win four straight bowl games. The Ags hope to parlay this win into a championship run this fall, and with another stellar recruiting class and the experience gained this year, the sky is the limit for this team.



NEWIND



ROB HAYENS '88



matt kent

TRYING TO BE AS
PRECISE AS POSSIBLE

BY ROB HAVENS '88

How did you approach the fall and the beginning of the spring to take advantage of some opening spots in the rotation?

In the fall I just tried to go out there and throw my game the best I could. Make the hitters try to get themselves out because I knew I couldn't overpower them. So, I had to be as precise as possible every time I went out. I was able to do that throughout the fall, and it has given me the chance coming into the spring. I just kept building on that

Did your success in the summer help to build your confidence in the fall?

Each time you go out, if you have a good start and you put three or four together, then your confidence is really high. That's what I built on from the summer and brought into the fall. Then, once I got that first outing out of the way in the fall, everything fell back into place just like how I was going in the summer—just a nice weekly routine.

What did you work on in the offseason in your game to prepare yourself for the season?

For me, it was about staying precise with all of my pitches. I learned some new things about the game, some

things that I can apply to my game that will also help my teammates with their games. I learned a couple of new pitches, mechanical things, a lot of tinkering—not big changes. I was trying to stay in a routine, keep my body in shape, and keep my mind as fresh on the game as possible

What is the confidence level of this pitching staff, and how will the new baseball affect you guys?

Confidence levels are going to fluctuate, as normal. As far as the new ball, they may fly out of the park faster and more often, but we'll have to just minimize big innings as much as possible. If we can't, we'll have plenty of teammates behind us looking to help out on defense, trying to pick guys off.

Does the offensive fire power you have coming back help?

The amount of at-bats we got back from last year is a big number. The senior leadership, along with the young guys that have stepped in swinging the bat very well during the spring, really helps. It's comforting to know that we can give up four or five runs in a game as a staff and still be confident that our team's going to score seven, eight, nine or even higher against some teams





Q&A with coach childress

BY ROB HAVENS '88

You bring back an experienced squad; what will that mean for this season?

Well, they know how to punch a time clock and take care of their business. When you go through the SEC, which is a thirty-game grind, you're facing great pitching for ten solid weeks. It can beat you up physically, but also emotionally. There's no replacement for experience, and for us to have 70% of our bats back is important, I think, for getting through this league.

Tell us about the change in the baseball.

It's a no-seam, minor league baseball. I think it's going to change the scope. I don't think we will go back to the days of an 18-14 game, but you're going to see more offense this year; more home runs, more doubles. You know, the game still being in the balance 'til the last out is made. We're not going to depend on a walk, a hit batter, an error, and then a big hit. You're going to see teams being able to hit their way back into some wins.

As the pitching coach, do you like that?

I do. I want to know we have a chance if we're down two or three runs after the 7th inning. We can hit our way back into the game. Being a head coach, obviously, a pitching coach likes the purity of pitching and defense, but I also like offense in our college game.

Did they go too far with the changes to the bat?

In every game that was played in Omaha

last year, the topic of conversation was how the excitement has been taken away from our game, which is at an all-time high as far as popularity. Meeting in the middle and getting the minor league ball, the no-seam baseball, is a good middle ground. We'll see at the end of this season how big of a difference that it does make. I would say for us right now, it is going to be a significant difference in a positive manner.

What are your thoughts on this year's lineup?

Mitchell Nau, catcher, is a senior in the best shape of his life and is committed to diet and weight room; we should see the benefits of that. Logan Nottebrok moves to first and is a force in the middle of the lineup. Ryne Birk will play second, he's a sophomore with a lot of at-bats. He had a great freshman year and we expect big things out of him; he had a special summer. At short, we have Blake Allemand, who's a fourth-year senior. He's played a lot of different positions. In the fall, he played as good at shortstop as anybody in the country could play. He made every routine play and was very productive offensively. At third is Ronnie Gideon, a sophomore who had a great fall for us. He hit eleven doubles and six homeruns. At center field, JB Moss replaces Krey Bratsen; he's got great speed and can run and defend. In right, we have our returning freshman, All American Nick Banks. Moving to left field will be Logan Taylor, so he can play defense and worry about being offensive.





recruiting april ryan

BY CHELSEA O'NEAL '17

Texas A&M softball hit the jackpot in 2014 when they scored true freshman, April Ryan. Originally from Keller, Texas, Ryan has an impressive softball resume. After being named First Team All-District and District MVP in high school, April proved she deserved a spot in the field amongst seven seniors in her freshman season with the Aggies. "Once I realized I was just part of the team, that it wasn't just about being a freshman on a team full of seniors, I just let myself go and had fun,"

April said. And she did just that. Ryan led the Aggies in doubles as well as triples for the 2014 season.

We were interested in the recruitment process and how April ended up at Texas A&M, so we asked her a few questions...

Tell me about your recruiting process and how you got to A&M

My dad coached me when I was younger; he was always my coach. We found out you could get scholarships for softball once you got on the higher teams that are well known. My dad went to a meeting for the Glory organization and told them he wanted his daughter to be on their team. He asked if they were going to have tryouts. So, I went as a seventh grader to a sixteen-and-under select team tryout. They told me to come back a year later in my eighth-grade year and that I would be on the team as long as my skills were still the same or better. I ended up making that team. My dad took me to all of these showcases; he was my favorite coach. Ed Naudin, he was great. He was one of those crazy, loud coaches. He took us to all of these showcases and got us seen before the games actually started, then he'd talk to tons of college coaches and get them interested in all of us. I would call and email the coaches and let them know I was interested. My dad was really dedicated. He would drive me wherever I was interested in going. He would drive me to their campus so I could make an unofficial visit.

How did you narrow it down to A&M?

Actually, at the beginning, I didn't know if they were interested in me, so I wasn't interested in them because I didn't want to be interested in someone that didn't want me. So, I was going to Florida for a visit, and I went to UCLA. And, unfortunately, I went to UT (laughing), that one I crossed off my list quickly. My select coach called Coach Evans and told her that I was going to be choosing my school soon and to let me know if she was interested. Coach Evans called my coach (they weren't allowed to call me because I was too young) and so I came up here for my visit and fell in love. I didn't even care about the other schools anymore (laughing). Whenever Coach Evans offered, I went home and

talked to my parents about it because I didn't want to just jump right in, but I called her back and to her I wanted to come here. And that was it!

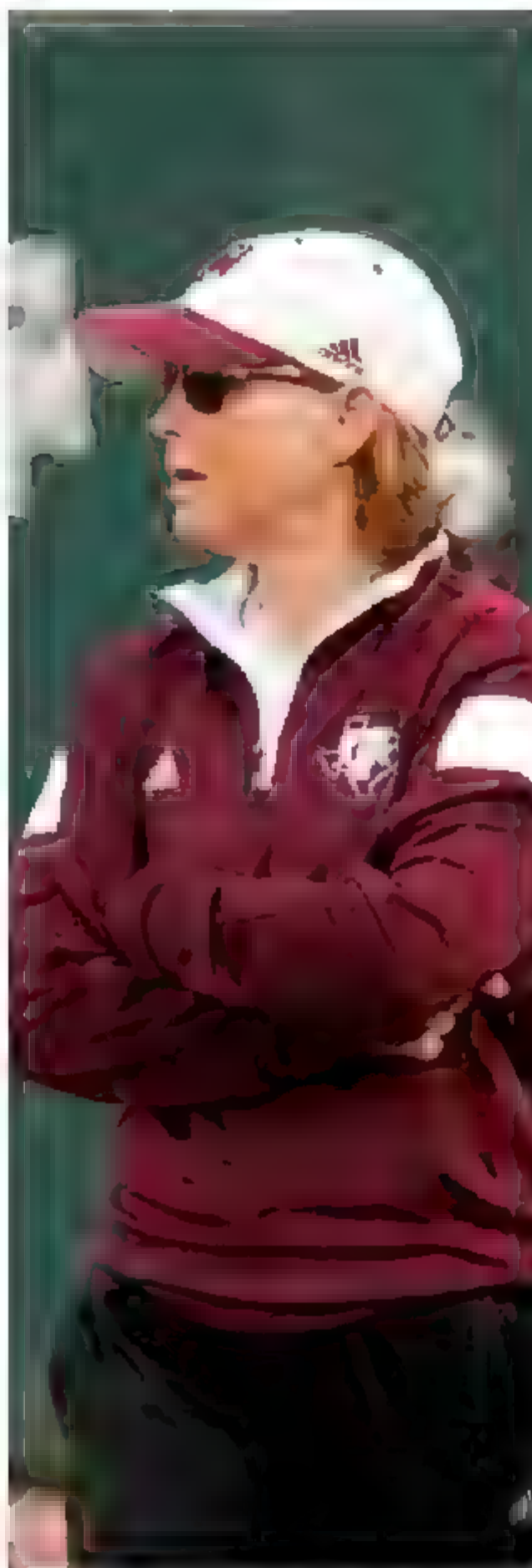
Can you pinpoint what made you want to come here?

I really don't know, to tell you the truth I was watching one of their practices, just sitting in the stands awkwardly—just me and my parents alone in the stands—and I just remember wanting to get out there and join them, and wanting to be a part of the team already. And I was only a ninth grader, or something like that. I was just ready to be here. When Coach Evans brought me into her office, I was like 'I want to come here, I'm ready, just give me a uniform and I'll play here now.'

The Aggies finished their 2013-2014 season with thirty-seven wins and twenty-two losses. After a tough loss to the University of Oklahoma to end their season, April ensured us that there are great things to come this season. This year's Texas A&M softball team features twelve freshman and sophomores and only eight upperclassmen. When we asked April about the effects of having such a young team, she said, "We're really inexperienced, which can be both good and bad because we have to reteach them. But then again, they can come in and just play without the pressure of so many seniors, like when I came in." The Aggies kicked off their season in two back-to-back tournaments where they won seven out of ten games.



SARAH PIATT '14



Q&A with coach evans

BY ROB HAVENS '88

Coach Evans, can you tell us about this year's squad?

We're really, really young. (Laughs). We're young, we're inexperienced. We have a senior outfielder who's returning on defense and a sophomore second baseman returning on defense. And everybody else is a non-starter returner

We also have Rachel Fox, who's on the mound, returning. She's our ace. Our pitching staff is doing a really nice job. We have a lot of depth in our pitching. In terms of our team, it's going to be a new look. People aren't going to recognize a lot of our players out there on the field. The fun part about that is just coaching young players that are eager and excited. You know, people that are really battling for positions. There's that give and take. There's the good side and the not so good side. It's fun to see the competition that goes on daily at practice.

Are you having to coach differently than you did last year?

Yeah. Last year we had six senior starters and they had basically started since their freshman year. There was great leadership. They were take-charge players. And so, with a team that's younger like this, you have to spend more time paying attention to details. Making sure our confidence levels are high. Doing a little more on field coaching and tweaking, as opposed to when you get those kids who just flip the switch and go. That's fun. I mean, I like that part. I think our coaches like that part. The teaching side of things.

What do you expect from the conference this year?

I think it's going to be really challenging, as it always is. Last year's National Champion and runner-up were both SEC teams. Florida and Alabama. It's just a brutal conference when it comes to softball, and we expect it to be very, very challenging. Our youngsters are going to have to get their feet wet. They're going to take their lumps. The key for us will be to stay the course. They understand it's a long season. It's a marathon, not a sprint. It's cliché, but it really rings true for us so that our kids understand the grind of the SEC. I think we'll be the underdog, with as young as we are and all of our youth, but I don't mind that. I like knocking off Goliath. I think if we take that mentality, it can serve us well.

Can you tell us about some players that you have already seen step up?

Yeah. Tori Vidales, a freshman starting at third base, is doing a great job for us. She's just a gamer! She's really athletic and shows up on game day ready to

play. She comes from an athletic family. Her brother, Josh, is the starting second baseman at U of H, her dad played baseball at Texas Tech, and her mom played basketball at Blinn. This is a sports-minded family, and this kid plays like it. She's got power; she can hit the long ball. She's got good hands on defense and is going to do a great job for us. She started out quick.

Kristen Cuyos, at shortstop, is from Pearland. She's got great hands at shortstop, really great range, and a good arm. She's just fun to watch play. She just gets out there and really feels comfortable at short, and you have to have that in this conference. She's a kid that's going to go out there and make plays every day.

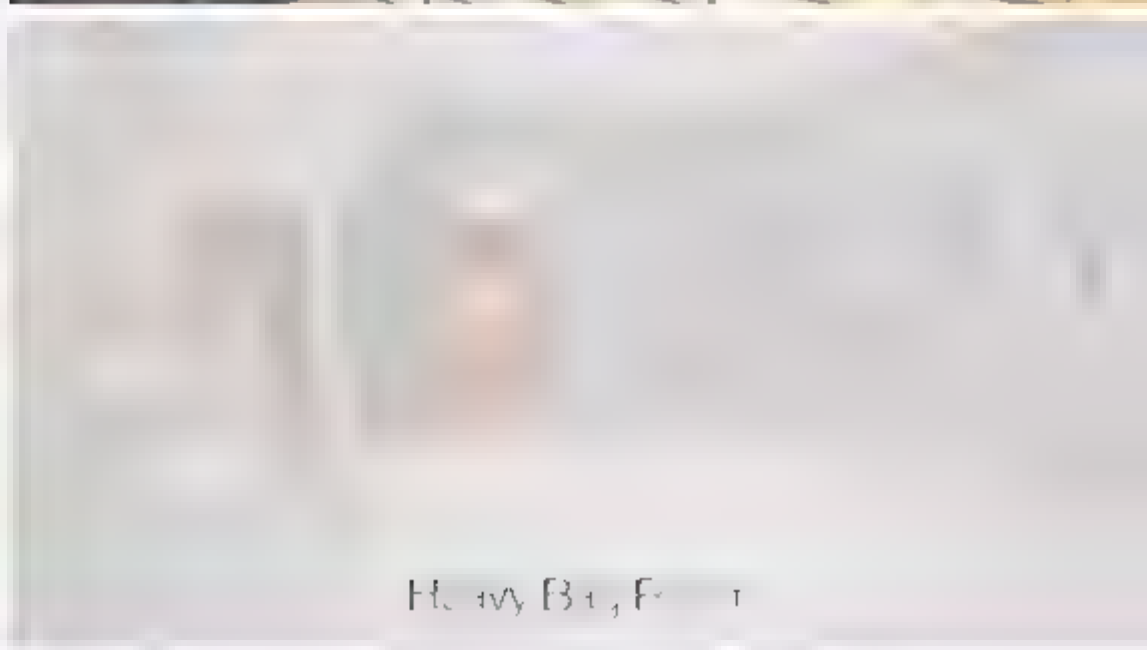
April Ryan, at second, is our one returning infielder. She's got great range and a good arm; just a steady player. She started as a freshman last year and was surrounded by all these seniors, so it was an easier transition for her. Now she has to be more of a leader in the infield; she's doing a good job with that.

You suffered a loss versus sixth ranked UCLA but then bounced back and beat them. What will that do for the team's confidence moving forward?

I'm really proud of our kids. The first night when we played UCLA we kind of threw them to the wolves. It was definitely a challenge, and we knew it would be against a team that has a good chance at making a run at the national title. I thought our kids managed it really well. After the game, I just told them that they need to understand that I'm not going to lose an ounce of sleep over this loss. I understand the lopsided score; it's hard to handle, but you have to see the bigger picture here. And our kids did. In the next game, our pitchers gave us a chance to stay in the game and our kids responded, with Tori Vidales being one who stepped up and hit a grand slam. So, I was really proud of our kids. I think that was a win we can put in our back pockets and, when we get down the road and are playing grueling opponents week in and week out, can say that we dropped a lopsided game and we understand that we can come right back and win. I think that win will serve us well down the road.



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Fencing Club

BY CHELSEA O'NEAL '17

The Fencing Club at Texas A&M University got its start in 1905, back when the university only accepted males. After facing many ups and down in membership throughout the years, the Fencing Club has grown into one of the



most successful Sport Clubs on the Texas A&M campus.

The Fencing Club competes all around the country throughout the year. Their biggest opponents are a part of an organization called the Southwest Intercollegiate Fencing Association (SWIFA), which includes schools such as the University of Texas, Baylor University, and Texas A&M Corpus Christi. The team competes in four SWIFA tournaments per year, and each tournament's points accumulate toward the club's final overall placement. Last year the club placed second overall at SWIFA events. Every year the team competes in a national competition. Last year both the Men's and Women's foil teams placed first at nationals. In 2013, Robert Wooley and Lyndy Black both placed first in the Individual Women's and Men's Foil. In April, the team will compete in a national competition in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where they will face schools from all over the nation.

One might be curious as to why a person chooses the fencing club at A&M over the hundreds of other clubs offered. "Most members join the club because it is such a unique sport club at Texas A&M,"

said club president, Michelle Thomas. The TAMU Fencing Club currently has twenty-five members that practice three times per week. Not everyone who joins the Fencing Club has participated in this unique sport before. "I would say right now the majority of the club had no experience in fencing before joining," said Thomas. It's not necessarily the skill that makes someone a good fencer; Thomas says that a fencer must also have the humility to not let success go to their head.

"I really enjoy being able to represent Texas A&M as more than just a student. I get to be part of a team that depends on each other and show the nation what Texas A&M is made of," said Thomas.



Wakeboarding Club

BY ROB HAVENS '88

The Texas A&M Wakeboarding Club began in 2002 with a group of students that just wanted to hang out with their friends and have some fun. In '11 the group became an official Sport Club through Rec Sports and the membership began to grow. Early on there were challenges, and having a boat was one of the biggest. Riding behind an '89 Ski Nautique was a tough beginning when you consider today's members are being pulled by a 2015 Axis T22. Thanks to a program set up this year with Texas Malibu, the club will get a new boat every year.

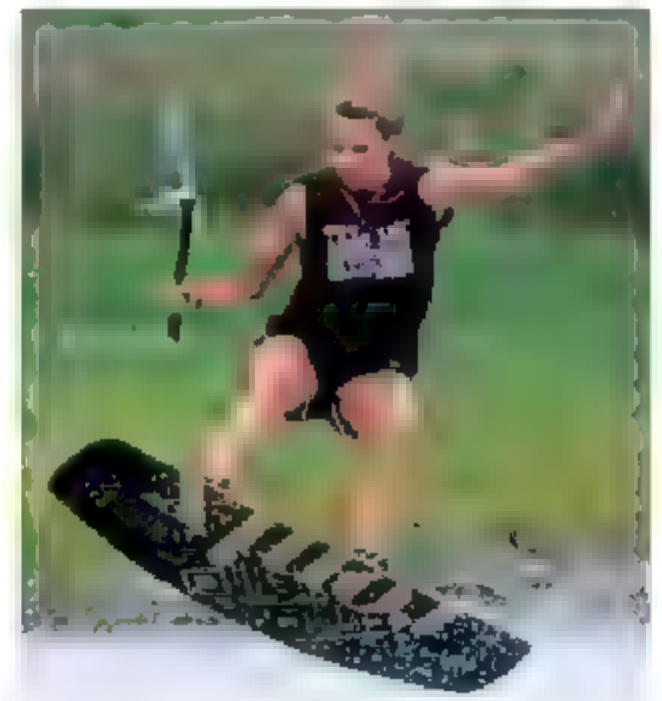
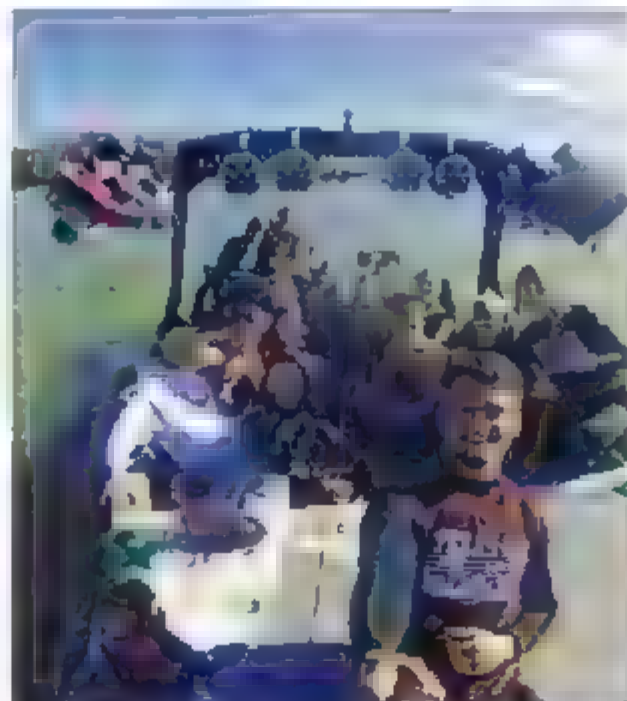
According to President Morgen Burchell, the boat is not the only thing that has changed over the years. The talent level has gotten much better, and the number of participants has grown into today's sixty-member, nationally-ranked club. TAMU Wake is currently ranked 4th in the nation for Boat and 2nd for Cable. The Aggies will compete in April in Las Vegas, and Burchell says, "We are hoping to finally get the Arizona State Wake Devils off their pedestal and

take the national title!"

The demand to be in the club has grown so much that they now have an application and interview process to fill open spots on the team. Morgen told AI, "We really are more than just a club, we truly are a family." Practicing three to four times per week, she says, "The more we grow in both recognition and legitimacy, the more we bond and the more that family feeling really sticks."

We asked Morgen what makes a great wakeboarder. "A great wakeboarder is

someone who has found their passion and love for riding, for helping other people, and for enjoying the feeling and experience of being out on the water. There isn't a feeling that can be matched by the sensation of gliding across glassy water and the feeling of flying when you hit the wake. People who are ready to promote the progression and growth of the sport and encourage others to get involved with the community are the people who make great wakeboarders."





Hard Hats for Little Heads

hosted by Healthy World Healthy Children, Texas ENT & Allergy
Texas Medical Association and Texas A&M Athletics

Help keep local children's heads healthy!

**What is Hard Hats
for Little Heads?**

a comprehensive educational program presented by
Aggie athletes, that stresses helmet safety for outdoor
sports such as bicycling, skateboarding, and riding ATVs

Our Mission

to ensure that every second grader in the Brazos Valley and surrounding school districts receives a helmet in an effort to protect children from head injuries

For information about the event, or to make a donation, contact
Mary Whitmire • 979-693-6000 • mwhitmire@texasentandallergy.com

healthyworldhealthychildren.com

Hard Hats for Little Heads

Helmets protect A&M and kids, too!

BY ROB HAVENS '88

Did you know that, on average, 250 children in the United States under the age of fourteen die each year because of a bicycle crash? Another 300,000 children are treated in emergency rooms for severe head injuries. Those are pretty alarming statistics. Recently Texas A&M athletes from every sport took time to help our local community by getting the word out about bicycle helmet safety.

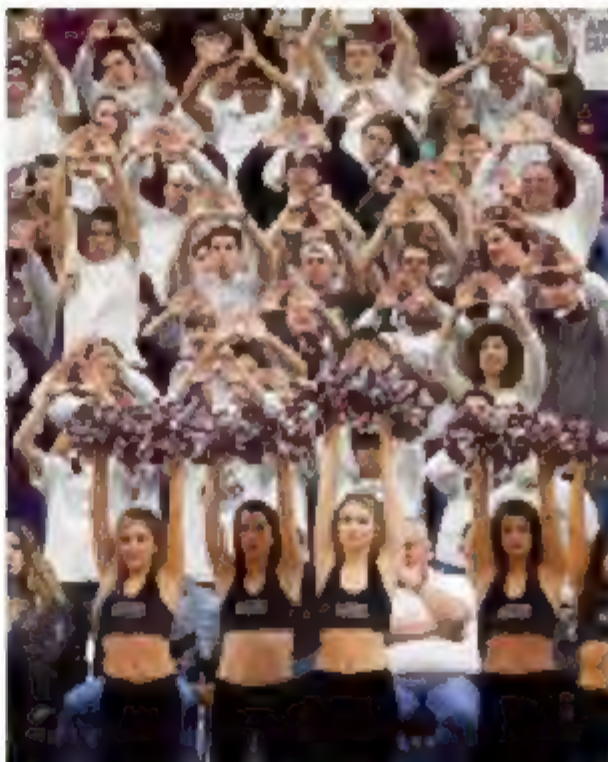
The event is called Hard Hats For Little Heads. Over the past seven years, more than 19,000 local second graders have been educated about the importance of wearing a helmet when bicycling, in-line skating, skateboarding, four-wheeling or participating in any other wheeled sport. The curriculum created by Texas Medical Association through donations by Texas ENT & Allergy and other corporate sponsors is presented through the Healthy World Healthy Children Foundation. In addition to educating the kids, each child is given a bicycle helmet to keep them safe as they ride.

Aggie Athletes Involved (AAI) and Texas A&M Athletics has partnered with the Foundation to get the word out and protect our local kids. During the program, several athletes from football, baseball, softball, and equestrian demonstrated how helmets protect them in their prospective sports and how kids need to protect their heads when they ride.

AAI president and A&M Cross Country athlete, Heather Sterling, who emceed the event, told us, "Younger children look up to athletes as role models, and we can make a major impact on someone's life by setting a good example and giving back." Local mayors also pitched in and participated in a "Hard Hat Relay" that wrapped up the day's events.

Helmets can reduce head injury by as much as 85%, yet only 40% of cyclists wear them. Hard Hats For Little Heads is doing an excellent job of trying to change those percentages for the kids in our area.







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